

# On Singing and Listening in Vaughan Williams's Early Songs

CERI OWEN

I begin with a question not posed amid the recent and unusually liberal scholarly attention devoted to a song cycle by Ralph Vaughan Williams, the Robert Louis Stevenson settings, *Songs of Travel*, composed between 1901 and 1904.<sup>1</sup> My question relates to "Youth and Love," the fourth song of the cycle, in which an unexpectedly impassioned climax erupts with peculiar force amid music of otherwise unparalleled serenity. Here, as strains of songs heard earlier intrude into the piano's accompaniment, the

singer narrates with ardent urgency their sounding and, apparently, their hearing. But precisely who is engaged in these acts at this, the musical and emotional heart of the cycle?

The recollected songs are first heard on the lips of the speaker in "The Vagabond," an ostensibly archetypal Romantic wayfarer who introduces himself at the cycle's opening in the lyric first-person, grimly issuing a characteristic demand for the solitary life on the open road. This lyric voice, its eye fixed squarely on the future, is retained in two subsequent songs, "Let Beauty Awake" and "The Roadside Fire" (in which life with a beloved is contemplated).<sup>2</sup> With "Youth and Love," however, Vaughan Williams rearranges the order of Stevenson's

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<sup>1</sup>For an overview of Vaughan Williams's career and critical reception as a songwriter, see Sophie Fuller, "The Songs and Shorter Secular Choral Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, ed. Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 106–20.

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<sup>2</sup>"Let Beauty Awake" possesses no clear first-person voice, though heard in the context of the surrounding songs—and in the absence of a third-person narration—it appears to belong to the same voice found in "The Vagabond."

poems such that a new voice is introduced, bearing a new burden of narration in the cycle.<sup>3</sup> One of relatively few *Travel* poems cast in the narrative third person, it functions here to confirm both retrospectively and prospectively the emotional dilemma staged in the songs: love, and by implication a settled life with the beloved, versus solitude, the freedom to break out, to wander:

To the heart of youth the world is a highwayside.  
Passing for ever, he fares; and on either hand,  
Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide,  
Nestle in orchard bloom, and far on the level land  
Call him with lighted lamp in the eventide.

Thick as the stars at night when the moon is  
down,  
Pleasures assail him. He to his nobler fate  
Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on,  
Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden  
gate,  
Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.

A change in tone for the narrating voice is articulated by Vaughan Williams's musical materials. Cast in a through-composed form (its two parts corresponding to Stevenson's stanza division), "Youth and Love" replaces the broad, regular melodies of the opening songs with a melodically indistinct recitation which hovers freely below a flexibly pulsating accompaniment (a reinterpretation, in turn, of the militantly regular "tramping" figures with which the cycle begins). Soon into the B section, however, the lyric voice of the earlier songs returns in the piano's instrumental voice. As the "pleasures" of nightfall "assail" the wanderer, an emphatic recall of the cycle's opening horn call shatters the reverie and precipitates decisive action. For no sooner does the narrator declaim "he to his nobler fate fares" than the narrated "he" of the poem seems to hear, to react to the statement: he "cries but a wayside word" and "sings but a boyish stave" while the

<sup>3</sup>Vaughan Williams set nine poems from Stevenson's posthumously published *Songs of Travel and Other Verses* (1896). On their selection and rearrangement, see Rufus Hallmark, "Robert Louis Stevenson, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Their *Songs of Travel*," in *Vaughan Williams Essays*, ed. Byron Adams and Robin Wells (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 129–56, esp. 130–35.

piano forcefully and self-consciously enacts both the "crying" and "singing" by quoting passages from "The Roadside Fire." Then, with a sudden return to the detached reflection of the opening, the protagonist slips away. As the singer-narrator informs us, "his face is gone." (See ex. 2, pp. 266–68.)

The recall within "Youth and Love" of material exposed earlier in the cycle might be understood simply as a subtle piece of word painting, or a formal practice of self-quotation familiar from the song cycles of Schumann and Beethoven, whose works became emblematic of a powerful tradition to which a number of early-twentieth-century British song composers sought to add a native voice. Such recollections highlight music's capacity to reflect upon its own history, akin to what Michael Steinberg has termed musical subjectivity.<sup>4</sup> The recollections might thus be heard as memories arising from the music's consciousness, as they might also in Edward Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (1899), perhaps a model for the young Vaughan Williams in crafting a narrative cycle at the turn of the century.<sup>5</sup>

The recognition of such self-consciousness has assumed a peculiar significance in the discourse surrounding Vaughan Williams's cycle. As Rufus Hallmark has emphasized, *Songs of Travel* was published in two separate books following its premiere at London's Bechstein Hall on 2 December 1904. The first book, issued in 1905, comprised the more "popular," accessible songs (as apparently assessed by

<sup>4</sup>Michael P. Steinberg, *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-Century Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), esp. 4–11.

<sup>5</sup>The absence of a clearly unified voice in *Sea Pictures*—which amalgamates texts by five different poets—has long prompted questions about its status as a cycle, a reception history challenged in two recent accounts, both of which attend to issues of thematic recollection, narrative coherence, and constructions of subjectivity; Karen Leistra-Jones, "The Deepes Have Music Soft and Low: Sounding the Ocean in Elgar's *Sea Pictures*," *Music & Letters* 97/1 (2016): 61–99, and Charles Edward McGuire, "Three Journeys, Two Paths: Locating the Lyric and Dramatic in Elgar's *Sea Pictures*," in *The Sea in the British Musical Imagination*, ed. Eric Saylor and Christopher M. Scheer (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), 179–203. On the narrative song cycle in early-twentieth-century British musical culture, see Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 42–64.

Boosey)—namely “The Vagabond,” “The Roadside Fire,” and “Bright Is the Ring of Words” (originally the last song of the cycle). The second book, issued in 1907, gathered together the remaining “Youth and Love,” “Let Beauty Awake,” “In Dreams” (originally song 5), and “The Infinite Shining Heavens” (song 6). The work, then, was not issued in the form premiered and apparently intended by Vaughan Williams—and including “Whither Must I Wander?” (song 7, composed in 1901 and published separately in 1902)—until 1960, at which point an epilogue was added having been found among the composer’s papers following his death two years earlier.<sup>6</sup> “Youth and Love” has thus provided crucial internal evidence for the cycle’s otherwise questionable integrity, as such, and has offered persuasive evidence, in turn, for the identity of the journeying protagonist as a Romantic “vagabond-artist.”

In this reading the song marks a moment of internalized creative enlightenment (a “flashback or reminiscence,” as Hallmark has it), as the Vagabond shuns the “pleasures” of domesticity in favor of a “nobler” creative fate. In reflecting upon in order to leave behind his “boyish staves”—an “earlier and easier conventional art”—the artist sheds the burdens of domesticity and his own immaturity as one and the same. “Youth and Love” has implicitly been heard, then, as a narrative turning point in a particular kind of life journey, as the protagonist achieves psychological depth and creative maturity in autonomy—a particular condition of Romantic subjectivity.<sup>7</sup>

The plausibility of Hallmark’s reading is reflected in the frequency with which it has been rehearsed.<sup>8</sup> The two songs that follow “Youth

and Love”—“In Dreams” and “The Infinite Shining Heavens”—are furthermore different from those that precede it, exhibiting the most consciously “artful” and harmonically exploratory music found anywhere in the cycle. Like the penultimate “Whither Must I Wander?” these songs return to the first-person lyric voice, as the poems selected by Vaughan Williams become for the first time rich in memory, his music newly anguished and melancholic in its response to the poetic subject’s reflection upon the past.

It seems fitting, with all this in mind, that the cycle concludes with “Bright Is the Ring of Words,” in which the poem’s self-conscious preoccupation with song-making—“Bright is the ring of words / When the right man rings them, / Fair the fall of songs / When the singer sings them”—is heightened by musical setting, and may be heard as a confirmation of the wanderer’s progressive passage toward and realization of creative fulfillment. This reading is ostensibly consonant, in turn, with the sentiments advanced in the epilogue, “I have trod the upward and the downward slope,” in which the poetic subject delivers an intensely introverted, elegiac reflection upon a journey near its end, as Vaughan Williams furnishes music rich in further thematic recollection (a weary, rhythmically augmented version of the fanfare from “The Vagabond,” nine measures derived from “Whither Must I Wander?” and, to conclude, six measures of “Bright Is the Ring of Words”). In this respect the epilogue becomes a suitably unifying conclusion in which the aged Vagabond reviews in order to take solace in his life’s creative achievement, reconciling himself to the mortality implicit in Stevenson’s final lines “And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.”

Though *Songs of Travel* undoubtedly issues an invitation to be heard in these terms, something is not quite right here, for reasons that relate to the connected issues of thematic recollection and a long-overlooked distinction between the cycle’s lyric and narrative voices.

<sup>6</sup>See Hallmark, “Robert Louis Stevenson,” 135.

<sup>7</sup>See Andrea K. Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity, 1774–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 2–3, and Martin A. Danahay, *A Community of One: Masculine Autobiography and Autonomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), esp. 11–37.

<sup>8</sup>For an overview, see Allan W. Atlas, “Vaughan Williams’s *Songs of Travel*: A Note on the Structural Role of the Thematic Recollections in Songs 4 and 9,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 7/1 (2010): 105–19, 106–07, n. 7. A recent reading of the “life-journey” traced by the cycle is provided by Roger Savage in *Masques, Mayings and Music-Dramas: Vaughan Williams and the Early Twentieth-*

*Century Stage* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), 4–33, in which it is deemed a “mono-drama”: “a sequence of scenes in the implied life-story of a single character, presented in the first person singular” (6).

Notably, the epilogue was not performed at the time of the cycle's premiere, though the extant manuscripts suggest that it was composed contemporaneously. Given that Vaughan Williams made no mention of it anywhere in subsequent references to the cycle's performance, publication, or recording, it appears he withheld it. Quite why he may have done so remains a source of persistent curiosity, as does the cycle's narrative coherence more broadly.<sup>9</sup> What significance, indeed, lies in its conclusion with "Bright Is the Ring of Words," which returns to a more anonymous, present-time narrative voice familiar from—and recurring for the first time since its disappearance following—"Youth and Love"?

Some answers may be provided at the heart of that song, whose musically distinct narrating voice has too easily been conflated with the lyric subject of whom it speaks. Its extraordinary climax refuses, moreover—even as it clearly functions to invoke—a sense of retreat into an internalized realm of personal memory. Though "for Stevenson the present could never be quite as enthralling as the past," as Ann Colley points out when exploring the ubiquitous trope of reminiscence in his work,<sup>10</sup> Vaughan Williams's music underlines an emphatic rhetorical projection both of the piano's recollected songs and of the singer's narration of their sounding and apparent hearing. Attention is accordingly called to a powerful sense of embodied "presence" at the climax, as the relation of time and space modeled thus far in the cycle is reconfigured, and the music forcefully sounds the performance of another voice—one whose singing and listening transforms the music's journey.

As I suggest through a closer examination of this outburst, *Songs of Travel* projects multiple voices, which unsettle the longstanding critical tendency to map a single protagonist through

its progress. This protagonist is habitually identified with Vaughan Williams himself, as the narrative of the vagabond-artist becomes a metaphor for his arduous struggle toward creative self-discovery and the formation of a national music. Such readings have been applied to numerous of his works, so often concerned with notions of heroic, self-sacrificing journey, but they are particularly ubiquitous in responses to these songs, long understood as an artistic and professional "breakthrough" for the composer, and as a turning point in the development of native art song.<sup>11</sup>

These readings point in turn to a persistent though unexamined trope of Vaughan Williams's broader reception, which highlights the rhetorical power of his work and its ability to "speak" to a listener with a peculiarly embodied, almost physical force.<sup>12</sup> This history itself highlights a tension, for while invoking the legacy of a nineteenth-century emphasis upon the lyric I (and the related assumption that it is the composer who "speaks" or whose persona is conveyed in his or her music), it is simultaneously suggestive of a more detached and collective subjectivity that inheres in the demand for embodied response.<sup>13</sup> The cycle plays on this tension through its self-conscious combination of different kinds of material—

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 238; A. E. F. Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams* (London: Faber, 1963), esp. "Man in Music," 99; and most recently Savage, *Masques, Mayings and Music-Dramas*, 312 and 4–33. On *Songs of Travel* as a model for early-twentieth-century British song composers, see Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, esp. 83.

<sup>12</sup>I detail this reception history in my doctoral thesis, *Vaughan Williams, Song, and the Idea of "Englishness"* (DPhil Diss. University of Oxford, 2014). A flavor is provided in Michael Kennedy's assessment that for "varied men, this music awoke in them the feeling that they were being personally addressed by a new, strong English voice": *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 108.

<sup>13</sup>This can be understood as an outgrowth and intensification of late-nineteenth-century British musical values, reflected and shaped by what Leon Botstein calls Edward Elgar's approachable "transform[ation of] subjective emotion into a compelling didactic engagement with the listener." See "Transcending the Enigmas of Biography: The Cultural Context of Sir Edward Elgar's Career," in *Edward Elgar and His World*, ed. Byron Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 365–406, here 366.

<sup>9</sup>See Allan W. Atlas, "On the Cyclic Integrity of Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel*: One New Question—No New Answer," *Musical Times* 154/1924 (2013): 5–17, and Nils Neubert, "Song 9 and Symmetry in *Songs of Travel*," *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal* 62 (February 2015): 7–8.

<sup>10</sup>Ann C. Colley, "Robert Louis Stevenson and the Idea of Recollection," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 25/2 (1997): 203–23, here 204.

the artful and the balladic, the individualistic and the collective—as recognized by its earliest publisher, who perhaps perceived the fraught status of a single, consistent creative agency behind the songs.<sup>14</sup> The division enforced by *Songs of Travel*'s composition and publication history reflects, but has perhaps also masked, a tension inherent in the cycle's aesthetic propositions. This tension, constitutive of much of Vaughan Williams's work, arises between the subjective isolation of the artist's voice and his participation in a singing—and listening—community.

In what follows I propose that Vaughan Williams's songs frequently frame the idea—or demand the engagement—of a hearer's contribution, as particular modes of singing and listening are figured and invited within the music's constitution. In this framing lies the cycle's mediation both of shifting patterns of education and appreciation within turn-of-the-century British musical culture and of contemporaneous notions of subjectivity. *Songs of Travel*, I suggest, betrays a debt to a Victorian legacy of divided consciousness and a post-Romantic attempt to negotiate the implications of the autonomous self in its divorce from society (a struggle inherent in Stevenson's work), while looking ahead to a more impersonal, communitarian model that, according to Vaughan Williams, necessitated the (re)constitution of a collective consciousness—what Julian Onderdonk has recently called an anti-Romantic rejection of “the cult of the individual ge-

nium” (or as the composer himself had it, “the modern craze for personality”).<sup>15</sup>

Composed at a time when Vaughan Williams was searching for an individual creative voice that simultaneously sustained his nascent commitment to the social utility and intelligibility of “art” music, these songs explore the possibility of achieving a self-consciously collective authorial subjectivity. They often play, indeed, on the possibility of figuring a musical intersubjectivity wherein boundaries between self and other—and between composer, performer, and listener—are collapsed.<sup>16</sup> By drawing attention to such moments within the Stevenson settings we are encouraged to recognize their persistence in the Dante Gabriel Rossetti sonnets in *The House of Life*, a cycle (sharing its title with Rossetti's extended sonnet sequence) composed and premiered alongside *Songs of Travel*, but one which, with the exception of the second song, “Silent Noon,” has been comparatively neglected. Though the two cycles have traditionally been considered to embody divergent aesthetic propositions—not least on account of the striking stylistic distance apparent between Stevenson's and Rossetti's poems—their comparable framing of singing and listening invites reflection upon their occupation of a shared aesthetic continuum. It is by attending to this continuum that the peculiar tendency of Vaughan Williams's work toward projecting a powerfully sub-

<sup>14</sup>Hallmark, however, notes Stephen Banfield's assessment that British publishers were “unaccustomed to cycles” and that few issued collections exceeding six or seven songs during the first half of the century. He also underlines, though, that Boosey had no clear intention to publish the second book of songs (“Robert Louis Stevenson,” 152, n. 26 and n. 27). Sophie Fuller remarks that the cycle as a whole was not deemed commercially viable (“The Songs and Shorter Secular Choral Works,” 113–14). Critics of the cycle's earliest performances singled out only the songs later published in Book 1 for discussion and praise, as well as the earlier-published “Whither Must I Wander?” A fuller account of the cycle's early reception than is elsewhere available can be found through consultation of press cuttings gathered in Vaughan Williams's scrapbook, held at the British Library, London: MS. Mus. 1714/11/2/2: 1902–1905.

<sup>15</sup>Julian Onderdonk, “Folksong Arrangements, Hymn Tunes and Church Music,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, 136–56, here 136. See also Danahay, *A Community of One*; Regenia Gagnier, *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization: On the Relationship of Part to Whole, 1859–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and by the same author, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>16</sup>The tension between individualism and collectivism in Vaughan Williams's earliest social, political, and aesthetic views has recently become the subject of renewed revisionist discussion, especially as understood in relation to the politics of the early-twentieth-century rural movement. See Julian Onderdonk, “The Composer and Society: Family, Politics, Nation” and Byron Adams, “Vaughan Williams's Musical Apprenticeship,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, 9–28 and 29–55, respectively. For a detailed discussion and contextualization of his statements on collective authorship, see my *Vaughan Williams, Song, and the Idea of “Englishness,”* esp. 22–69.

jective voice that simultaneously claims identification with no single agency can begin to be drawn into focus.

*Songs of Travel*'s constructions of subjectivity are rather more complex than conveyed in the foregoing discussion, not least because an awakening of creative self-consciousness dawns before "Youth and Love," perhaps most obviously in "The Roadside Fire." The text of this song, Stevenson's poem "I Will Make You Brooches," moves from the speaker's promises to "make a palace fit for you and me" toward a recognition that "this shall be for music when no one else is near, / The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!" Musically, a sense of the protagonist's growing artistic consciousness advances here through the shift away from the tender, balladic mode of the opening toward a more personal, almost exaggerated lyricism, as the melody's developmental blossoming suggests emotional and artistic maturation and the emergence of a more individual subjective voice. This development is underscored by the self-reflexive hint of thematic recollection provided in the harmonic and textural reference to the rapturous piano figures heard throughout the preceding "Let Beauty Awake" (see ex. 1).

The partial recollection functions as so often in the cycle to enrich a nascent sense of artistic consciousness. By the end of the song there sounds the tentative murmur of another voice—perhaps that of the implied addressee who will "keep [her] body white"—whose presence is intimated when the promised "song" is relayed as "fine for singing" and "rare to hear," which draws from the piano a responsive "singing" and the implication that it has heard the voice (mm. 48–49). When the "song" becomes one "that only I remember, that only you admire," the piano offers an "admiring" shadowing (mm. 50–52), and thereafter, with the final lines ("Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire"), a temporal stretch on "roadside" enables the piano's independent recollection of the lover's earlier, simpler melody, venturing now an individualistic development in harmonious sixths and fifths (mm. 56–57). The suggestion is that in the idyllic reciprocity of the lovers the beloved functions as a mirror to the protagonist's narcissistic inner conscious-

ness, nurtured through her encouragement in the recalling and developing of his materials.<sup>17</sup>

The artist thus becomes aware of his status as such; indeed it is surely no accident that it was at the roadside or beside the fire that Stevenson in his 1876 essay "Walking Tours" imagined "spiritual repletion" and entry into "The Land of Thought" after a long day's "march"—or, as Anne Wallace interprets of many such nineteenth-century celebrations of walking, "an enhanced sense of self, clearer thinking, more acute moral apprehension, and higher powers of expression."<sup>18</sup> That Vaughan Williams discarded the title of Stevenson's poem in favor of "The Roadside Fire" is, with this in mind, a significant gesture (especially given that only in regard to "Whither Must I Wander?" was this elsewhere in the cycle his practice).

A backdrop is thus provided for the musical presentation in "Youth and Love" of an advanced aesthetic consciousness, in which thematic recollection facilitates a heightened creative enlightenment that reaches beyond any internalized and purely personal awakening. The song begins with the sense that time has passed. The reflective rhetorical mode of the narrative voice—its melodic line unhurried, assured in its self-directed freedom—suggests observation from a new, experienced vantage point, enriched by the enlightened, unburdened quality of G major when heard following the

<sup>17</sup>"The Roadside Fire" might thus be heard to stage a classic example of what Martin Danahay calls the "monologic" tendency of some nineteenth-century masculine autobiographical writing, wherein woman or nature is figured—and silenced—within the text in order to enrich the protagonist's sense of autonomous subjectivity; see Danahay, *A Community of One*.

<sup>18</sup>See Robert Louis Stevenson, "Walking Tours," first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* and reprinted in such early-twentieth-century anthologies as *The Footpath Way: An Anthology for Walkers*, with an introduction by Hilaire Belloc (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1911), 159–72; and Anne D. Wallace, *Walking, Literature, and English Culture: The Origins and Uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 13. For a contextualization of the cycle in terms of what Roger Savage calls the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Anglo-American "cult of actual and metaphorical walking, journeying, tramping and vagabonding," see his "Books to Make a Traveller of Thee: Pilgrims, Vagabonds and the Monodramas of Vaughan Williams," in *Masques, Mayings and Music-Dramas*, 4–33. See also "Vaughan Williams, the Romany Ryes and the Cambridge Ritualists," 304–58.

40 *Meno mosso*

*p* And this shall be for *mf* mu - sic when

*rallentando*

43 *largamente*

no — one else is near, The fine song for

46 sing - ing, the rare song to hear! That

*cantanto*

49 *largamente*

on - ly I re - mem - ber, that on - ly you ad -

*colla voce*

Example 1: "The Roadside Fire," mm. 40–63.

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52

*trillo*

mire, Of the broad road that

*pp*

*trillo*

54

stretch es and the

56

road side fire.

*pp*

59

*pp una corda*

8

Example 1 (*continued*)

“internal” world of D $\flat$  (with which the preceding song concludes). The narrated “he” (the implied vagabond) is apparently observed here from the disinterested position of one who knowingly relates his fate. The baritone’s open-

ing *piano* dynamic and relatively high tessitura empty the voice of the full-bodied depth and virility afforded by the low range in which he sang at the cycle’s opening, a rhetorical and timbral shift that conveys a sense of wisdom,



and, if not frailty, then of otherworldly disembodiment.

With this there emerges a sense of temporal and spatial distance, and even a suggestion that the protagonist travels within a different temporal and spatial realm than the one occupied by his narrator. Vaughan Williams plays here with the metrical regularity of the piano's "walking" accompaniment (directed to *espressivo* and *rubato*), combining duple- and triple division eighth notes with a long-breathed vocal line rich in half- and dotted-half notes. For the first time in the cycle the music is constituted not through regular, clearly articulated phrases but through overlapping, irregular paragraphs. The coherence of voice and piano at the end of each phrase is obscured by the metrical displacement and by a constant shifting of harmonic centers. As a shadow of the fanfare from "The Vagabond" is uttered from the piano with the words "passing forever he fares" (mm. 11–12), the narrated protagonist appears to swerve into closer proximity with the sudden *crescendo* to and *diminuendo* from *forte*, only to move away again as he passes by, leaving the position of watchful observance to be retaken by the narrator whose distance we are irresistibly invited to share (see ex. 2).<sup>19</sup>

With the beginning of the B section an unprepared shift from the home key of G to a celestial E major opens a new musical space. The harmonic profile and textural shift provide a reference back, once more, to the self-conscious final verse of "The Roadside Fire," functioning both as a memory and as a signal to further creative enlightenment of a kind often found in Vaughan Williams's songs (as, for example, frequently throughout "Silent Noon"). With the second, emphatic recollection of the fanfare and the onset of the climax, the music brings the longer-range "past" of the cycle's opening powerfully into the present, keeping the two spaces in flux as the different temporal

realms interpenetrate each other and the sense of detached observation begins to collapse.

"Youth and Love" thus invokes something of Charles Rosen's Romantic "double time-scale," in which "the past is represented through the immediate sensation of the present." Somewhat akin to the rustling wind and horn calls that precede each stanza of Schubert's "Der Lindenbaum" (the fifth song of *Winterreise*), the vagabond's fanfare acts as a symbol of spatial and temporal distance, as do the quotations from "The Roadside Fire." With the conjoining of voice and piano to figure the narrated protagonist's cry of farewell and singing of a "boyish stave," a comparable "confound[ing] of memory and immediate perception," as Rosen has it, sees the music transform "remembrance into an evocation of what is actually happening, a phenomenological description of the experience of remembering and of being attacked by reality at the same time."<sup>20</sup>

Yet unlike its counterpart in "Der Lindenbaum," or frequently in *Die schöne Müllerin*, Vaughan Williams's piano rarely takes on the agency of the natural world in this cycle. It does not function as a representation of the wind or the singing of the brook, but rather as an enactment of the singing—and movement—of a(nother) body. It thereby goes far beyond the "sublime" moments described by Rosen, for the collapse of spatial and temporal distance alongside that of the observational vantage point produces both the division of the voice *and* the active collaboration of the apparently disinterested narrator in the narration and constitution of multiple singing—and listening—voices.

The point is made at many levels by the musico-poetic discourse. As Allan Atlas has observed, the climax at "cries" "differs in virtually all musical respects from what precedes and follows it."<sup>21</sup> Framed away from the musical progress by a double bar, a *fortissimo* dynamic, a change of time signature, and a series of directions to *più mosso*, the moment effects a series of ruptures; its effect is "spotlight-grabbing, extroverted, and stagey . . . downright

<sup>19</sup>Mark W. Booth observes of narrative song that, as in traditional ballads, "we do not identify with a character in the song, but with the teller, with his implicit attitudes or his projected state." See "The Point of View of Song," in *The Experience of Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 14–16.

<sup>20</sup>Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 116–24.

<sup>21</sup>Atlas, "Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel*," 107–08.

**Andante sostenuto**

*p espressivo. tempo rubato*

To the heart of youth the world is a high - way side.

Pass - ing for ev - er, he fares; and on ei - ther

*poco f*

*pp* hand, Deep in the gar - dens gol - den pav - il - ions hide, Nes - tle in or - chard bloom,

*pp misterioso* and far on the lev - el land *mf* Call him

*pp misterioso* *mf*

Example 2: "Youth and Love."  
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25 *3*  
with light - ed lamp in the ev - en -

30  
tide. Thick as stars at

35  
night when the moon is down Plea - sures as - sail him

39 *f risoluto* *affrettando*  
He to his no - ble fate Fares; and but waves a  
*f risoluto* *sempre f cresc.* *affrettando*

The musical score is written for a voice and piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into four systems, each starting with a measure number (25, 30, 35, 39). The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment includes various textures, including chords, arpeggios, and triplets. Dynamics include p, dim., pp, f risoluto, and sempre f cresc. The tempo/mood markings are affrettando and risoluto. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Example 2 (continued)

43 *Più mosso* *ff*

hand as he pass - es on, Cries but a way - side

48 *Più mosso* *pp*

word to her at the gar - den gate, Sings

53 *rall.* *Tempo I*

but a boy - ish stave and his face is

58 *pp* *sempre rall e dim.*

gone, is gone.

Example 2 (*continued*)

operatic in nature."<sup>22</sup> Put another way, the passage diverts attention onto the quality of voice itself as narrative gives way to enactment and we are "brought up against 'the boundaries of a membrane laid down by an outside voice.'"<sup>23</sup>

When the piano re-sounds the cycle's opening horn call, the music's sudden turn to *forte risoluto* breaks through the celestial arpeggios. The reflective tone of detachment falls away along with a sense of distance that began with the E-major triad in m. 33, the natural G and seventh chord on C# suggesting a move back toward the G major of the song's opening. Thus while the fanfare's topical content—as a symbol of distance, remembrance, and regret—functions to underscore not simply its earlier appearance but its status here as a memory, it simultaneously collapses that distance (and that function), heralding and enacting the music's powerful move into the foreground.

The presence of another voice is articulated by the piano's markedly different activity. Registering the vagabond's fanfare, the poem's "he" makes the decision to pursue "his nobler fate"—and so he does, "wav[ing] a hand as he passes on," for the piano notably enacts the departure. At precisely this moment it regains the "walking" figures of the song's opening, now transformed into an urgent tread with the chords thickly re-scored and markings of *affrettando* and *sempre crescendo* driving the accelerating motion forward to a climax. The sense of urgency mounts as the music hovers around another seventh chord, which seems now to promise a resolution to C major.

This promise functions, we soon realize, to heighten the preparation for the climactic arrival at "cries," where a further unexpected shift occurs before the music bursts out with a *crescendo* to *fortissimo* as the protagonist "cries but a wayside word to her." Attaining the G major implied all along by the fanfare's rupture (albeit with a second inversion chord), the pi-

ano triumphantly re-sings here a rhythmically modified quotation of the vocal melody from "The Roadside Fire" marked *più mosso*. But although the piano is furnished with a lyric voice, the singer does not simply narrate its singing, for in assuming a heightened vocal delivery—reaching for the longest and loudest note found anywhere in the cycle with the word "cries"<sup>24</sup>—he seems simultaneously to narrate and partake of this vocal act. This is indeed a "cry" that delivers that word's semantic content by paradoxically throwing attention onto its blank, embodied utterance as voice, ensuring that the piano's lyric singing is allowed to move into the foreground (leaving in doubt neither the melodic derivation nor the discrete identity of the piano's voice). The passage puts a strain on the embodied contribution both of singer and pianist quite unlike anything else in the cycle, as the human voice is suspended in a stasis of vocal plenitude, while the instrumental voice is oratorically active in its melodic simulation of singing.

Without warning, however, the piano's voice offers a further, different thematic recollection, now *pianissimo* and cast without preparation in a remote, flat-side F major that quickly slips down to E♭ major. Here the singer-narrator relays in newly hushed tones the "singing" of a "boyish stave" (again *più mosso*). The effect is to move the music back into the distance while simultaneously pushing the tempo forward once more until the key word "stave" is reached, at which point the music instantly recedes, unwinding and swiftly returning to the detached narration of the opening. All at once the tempo, time signature, key, and dynamic with which the song began are restored, and the space is closed with a double bar. Thereafter, as we know, the narrated protagonist departs.

In its complex play with temporal and spatial realms the climax of "Youth and Love" seems to constitute both the recollection and simultaneously the sounding of a voice, as the vocal "cry" claims for itself a performative presence that exposes the singing of another voice: the piano's. The multiple, present-time voices

<sup>22</sup>Atlas, "On the Cyclic Integrity," 14.

<sup>23</sup>In this sense the song exhibits procedures akin to those in Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* as discussed by Nicholas Marston (whom I quote here); see "Voicing Beethoven's Distant Beloved," in *Beethoven and His World*, ed. Scott Burnham and Michael P. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 124–47, here 129. Marston has recourse in turn to Carolyn Abbate's work.

<sup>24</sup>With the exception of a brief moment found in "The Vagabond" (at m. 60).

are framed as such when another passage from "The Roadside Fire" is stated in a remote harmonic, textural, and dynamic space, its status as both temporally and spatially distant—its status as a memory—(re)claimed for its second utterance. This flat-side reference, with the key word "stave" and its implication of written text, alludes to the moment at which the voice of another makes its presence heard at the end of "The Roadside Fire" (mm. 56–57), the point at which the artist achieves consciousness as such. Its recollection at the end of "Youth and Love" might well be considered the point at which an earlier art is recalled and discarded, as noted in previous readings. But it is also, with "stave," a moment wherein the protagonist becomes a writer, realizing his status as the single owner of the text. This word prompts a recession of the performative climax and has significant implications for the cycle's journey thereafter, as we shall see. But let us first ask where this leaves an interpretation of the outburst at "cries." Whose voices burst forth here, and what is their function within the cycle? And who, then, is the narrator who sings at the opening of "Youth and Love"?

Implicit in the paucity of critical discussion devoted to the narrator of *Songs of Travel* is an assumption that he can be taken for the artist himself, self-consciously observing his own progress. Or he might ostensibly offer a glimpse of the author, like the Poet in Müller's *Die schöne Müllerin*, before Schubert removed his framing narration and presented the story through the voice of the narrated protagonist.<sup>25</sup> These readings need not be mutually exclusive, for Vaughan Williams's disinterested narrator does not remain so. He does not contain in order to relay the action of the lyrical climax; rather he becomes an active agent in constituting its multiple voices. (Indeed it is perhaps by virtue of the very fact that the narrating voice collapses into the complex of voices at the climax that his identity and function within the cycle have not been examined.)

In the context of late-nineteenth-century psy-

chology and of Stevenson's broader output, the sense in *Songs of Travel* of a divided consciousness and its sudden, uncontrollable outburst—in which a self appears to sound its division—might be understood in terms of the archetypal Victorian split between the public and the private, as codified in such texts as Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). This novella is itself told from a variety of different perspectives (though not from Hyde's inarticulate own). The voices sounded at the heart of "Youth and Love" may by extension be understood as those of the beloved as a manifestation of the protagonist's desire—a repressed desire of the Victorian private self's interiority, and one that public language could not articulate.<sup>26</sup> Thus the blank "cry" of the voice withholds the word's semantic content while the piano's inarticulate, instrumental "voicing" proceeds in a suspension of verbal communication. The end of the word "cries" is reached and its "meaning" conveyed only once the embodied and musical meaning inherent in the sound of the voice—and in the thematic recollection—have had sufficient time to register. The enlightenment at the climax, then, is pointedly a musical one. It is an embodied communication that precedes and exceeds articulate language, exploiting and highlighting the temporal control of music over words in delaying the workings of the symbol.

Yet this kind of "private language," as Martin Danahay has observed, is suggestive of excessive individuality—an "interiority that by definition cannot be embodied in language because it is predicated upon its uniqueness and originality."<sup>27</sup> Such a reading sits to some extent uncomfortably with Stevenson's—as much as with Vaughan Williams's—style and aesthetics. The notion that the self is not unique and inviolable is inherent at the thematic level of such texts as *Jekyll and Hyde*, in which "two

<sup>25</sup>A comparison made by Roger Savage: see *Masques, Mayings and Music-Dramas*, 6.

<sup>26</sup>Dominique Delmaire has examined Stevenson's "introjection" of a beloved in some of his poems, making her "an integral part" of the poetic subject, often to be "torn off" in the rupture of "a fusional or identificatory bond—a catastrophe tantamount to the loss of his very self." See "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Love in the Poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson," *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens* 60 (2004): 19–51, here 25.

<sup>27</sup>Danahay, *A Community of One*, 176.

distinct subjectivities inhabit the same 'self.'"<sup>28</sup> This doubleness extends not only to the novella's plethora of voices but also to a stylistic tension between populist sensationalism and literary "seriousness," a characteristic of Stevenson's oft-criticized lack of authorial subjectivity—his stylistic mimicry or "aping," as he himself put it, of other voices.<sup>29</sup> This tendency is redolent of Vaughan Williams's music and of his frequent claims to "cribbing" from a variety of sources, not least from folk music.

The expressive design of "Youth and Love" indeed refuses such individualistic interiority, as does the cycle more broadly.<sup>30</sup> In forcefully throwing attention onto the sonic resonance of the human voice it grasps for a heightened communicative function, obscuring verbal meaning by reaching out beyond the music's confines to become a peculiarly embodied medium of social discourse. Its effects correspond with Lawrence Kramer's reading of moments wherein "song envelops voice":

As the medium of meaningful utterance, voice brings the music into a space of potential or virtual meaning even when actual meaning is left hanging; as the medium of social relationship, voice involves the listener in a potential or virtual intersubjectivity that in some circumstances may be realized in the course of the song; and as a corporeal medium, voice addresses itself in its sensuous and vibratory fullness to the body of the listener.<sup>31</sup>

Vaughan Williams emphasized precisely this intersubjective potential of the human voice

throughout his extensive writings and statements about music. In his earliest lectures, delivered on the subject of folk song in 1902 (contemporaneous with the composition of *Songs of Travel*), he recalled the experience of hearing a Gaelic preacher while walking on the Isle of Skye. Through the blank sounds of an unfamiliar language he became deeply engaged by the material content of the preacher's voice, its volume and intensity heightened by emotional excitement in the desire for communication. Here, the composer argued through an unacknowledged mythology of sources, lay the origin of "national song," a body of music made and thus "understood" by a community. The memory indeed of finding himself in the position of an uninitiated listener—an experience he agonized over throughout his life—nurtured thereafter a fervent belief in the democratic capacity of the human voice to awaken even the most unmusical, inexperienced listener to "the vistas of abstract music." The act of compositional creation became, in his imagination thereafter, akin to the performance of a folk singer.<sup>32</sup>

The outburst at the heart of "Youth and Love" is suggestive less of the embodied inarticulacy of Stevenson's anti-social, degenerate Mr. Hyde, then, than of what Julia Reid has called the author's preoccupation with "the persistence and irruption of pre-civilized states of consciousness in the modern world."<sup>33</sup> Stevenson went in search of a primitive collectivism on his own travels both at home and abroad, his fascination with premodern communities arising, as it did for Vaughan Williams, in part from an interest in folklore.<sup>34</sup> The excessive drama at the climax of *Songs of Travel*

<sup>28</sup>Stephen Arata, "The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*," in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. and with an introduction by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2005), 185–210, here 203.

<sup>29</sup>For an overview, see Roger Lewis's introduction to *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Roger C. Lewis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 2–5, and Arata, "The Sedulous Ape," 203–04. Trevor Hold has proposed that in its peculiarly "disconcerting" amalgamation of different kinds of material, *Songs of Travel* is suggestive of Vaughan Williams's imitation of Stevenson's "sedulous ape"; *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 110.

<sup>30</sup>*Songs of Travel* has in its "open-air freshness" long been understood as a conscious mode of Edwardian "breaking out" from repressive Victorian strictures.

<sup>31</sup>Lawrence Kramer, "Beyond Words and Music: An Essay on Songfulness," in *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 51–67, here 54.

<sup>32</sup>For a detailed discussion, see my *Vaughan Williams, Song, and the Idea of "Englishness,"* esp. 22–69. Vaughan Williams's earliest writings were collected and reissued in 2008 for the first time since their original publication in scattered sources from 1897 onward: see *Vaughan Williams on Music*, ed. David Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). On the composer's early concern with the experience of the listener, see, for example, "The Soporific Finale" [1902], 19–21.

<sup>33</sup>Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 11.

<sup>34</sup>See, for example, Reid, "Stevenson as Anthropologist: Culture, Folklore, and Language," in *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle*, 107–73.

derives from a sense of revelation found in the cycle's successive connections to its own origins, a chain of retrospective textural and harmonic links from the second part of "Youth and Love," to the final verse of "The Roadside Fire," to "Let Beauty Awake" (in which "beauty" clearly stands as a metaphor for "creativity"), and to the cycle's first sounds in the fanfare with which "The Vagabond" begins. "Youth and Love" functions thus to provide enlightened access to its own "historical" past, excavating the innermost realization of the self while demanding that the listener become party to and constitutive in the protagonist's enlightenment.

Such enlightenment is facilitated by the vantage point established at the song's opening, the sense of distance cast back upon the preceding songs. The function of the narratorial voice both at the climax and within the cycle more broadly is evidently to clarify and expose the "mimetic" nature of the earlier songs, their production of the "unscrolling" which, as Carolyn Abbate puts it, "traps the listener in present experience and the beat of passing time, from which he or she cannot escape."<sup>35</sup> This quality is inherent in the materials of the opening, as Vaughan Williams returns the Lieder wanderer to his origins as a simple, folkloric type. His song is an act of embodied musical "making," actualizing the psychological longing of Stevenson's poems—for "The Vagabond," like many of Stevenson's *Travel* poems, is already pervaded by a frustrated, latent music; it is even written "to an air of Schubert," as a subtitle signals. Vaughan Williams's vagabond, however, does not in his journey reveal a song of retrospection (at least not until "The Roadside Fire"); at the outset he harbors no psychological depth, no inward, subjective narration of loss like that of the alienated Schubertian wanderer of *Winterreise*. Rather, "The Vagabond" is a poem wherein the subject exists and is constituted only through the subjunctive utterance of future desires. The setting of such a text necessarily traces music's material pro-

cess through time, its making from moment to moment as highlighted here in the pronounced "walking" figures of the piano's accompaniment, indices of a physical act of material and subjective creation traversing the cycle's journey (see ex. 3).

Vaughan Williams frequently imagined the moment-to-moment constitution of a work as arising from a collaborative creative act, shared between composer, performer, and even listener. In "The Making of Music," lectures delivered toward the end of his life, he emphasized that "musical appreciation especially demands active participation rather than passive acceptance on the part of the hearer. When we listen to a symphony as we should do, we are actually taking part, with the composer and the performers, in the creation of that symphony." But, he qualified, "before we can truly listen we must be able also to create."<sup>36</sup> The "creation" of music was predicated from his earliest writings upon the embodied experience of material sound, as distinct from text-based study. Such experience was often imagined spatially, as a journey through a work's imagined terrain: "A musical score is like a map. The expert map reader can tell fairly exactly what sort of country he is going to visit, whether it is hilly or flat . . . but can he experience from a map the spiritual exaltation when a wonderful view spreads before his eyes?"<sup>37</sup> The model for such music-making lay in "primitive" cultures: "We may imagine that in primitive times . . . the invention and production of sound may have been simultaneous, that there was no differentiation between the performer and the composer."<sup>38</sup> In 1910 he was already concerned with facilitating the intelligibility of music's journey for a listener, emphasizing that "the business of the composer is to make his visions intelligible to others . . . ranging his ideas so

<sup>35</sup>See Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 53.

<sup>36</sup>Vaughan Williams, "Making Your Own Music" [1954], in *National Music and Other Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 237–42, here 237.

<sup>37</sup>Vaughan Williams, "The Letter and the Spirit" [1920], in *National Music and Other Essays*, 121–28, here 125.

<sup>38</sup>Vaughan Williams, "Some Tentative Ideas on the Origins of Music" [1932], *National Music and Other Essays*, 12–20, here 13–14. Tellingly, Vaughan Williams referred to the days spent studying and discussing his compositions with Gustav Holst as their "field days."



Allegro moderato  
(alla marcia)

*p ma sempre marcato*

*sempre pesante il basso*

7 *risoluto*

Give to me the life I love, Let the love go by me, Give the joy-ly heaven above, And the by-way nigh me

Example 3: "The Vagabond," mm. 1–12.

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that they are analogous to the events of some story, some poem, some historical or ideal person or some natural phenomenon. . . . The extraneous idea . . . is simply a common ground where the composer can meet the hearer before they start together on the voyage to unknown regions whither he is taking them."<sup>39</sup>

"The Vagabond"—a blank, "ideal" character found so frequently in Vaughan Williams's journeying music—highlights the cycle's invitation to cast one's self as the music's maker, to join in the accessible journey of the music's creation. Early-twentieth-century British music pedagogues similarly imagined the practice of song-making as a process of "remaking" the work from moment to moment, and often conceived of this process as an idealized collaborative act of the kind proposed by Vaughan Williams. As Harry Plunket Greene (the bass-baritone to whom the *Travel* cycle was dedicated) put it in his 1912 treatise *Interpretation in*

*Song*, "Singer and audience sing, in reality, together in sympathy."<sup>40</sup> Like many vocal pedagogues active during the early part of the century, Plunket Greene imagined the singer as a journeying "pioneer" and song as a landscape in which to search for a premodern, collective musical experience. The song's journeying promised the recovery of lost values, of community in communication, as singer and pianist were instructed to take the listener by the hand in traversing music's terrain. Musical enlightenment thus grew through a peculiarly physical act of marching through an imagined external landscape, after which the embodiment of its space was to tell in the aching of the muscles.<sup>41</sup> In such work lay an opportunity

<sup>39</sup>Harry Plunket Greene, *Interpretation in Song* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 37.

<sup>41</sup>On all this, see my "Making an English Voice: Performing National Identity during the English Musical Renaissance," *Twentieth-Century Music* 13/1 (2016): 77–107. A spatial conception of musical experience, in which "landmarks" formed points of reference for a listener, can be found in many appreciation manuals of the early century: see, for example, Stewart Macpherson, *Music and Its Appreciation, Or, The Foundations of True Listening* (London: J. Williams; G. Schirmer, 1910).

<sup>39</sup>Vaughan Williams, "The Romantic in Music: Some Thoughts on Brahms" [1910], in *Vaughan Williams on Music*, 165–70, here 169.

to make the musical self. As another of Vaughan Williams's dedicatees, the baritone Arthur Foxton Ferguson, expressed it in a lecture on music education: "Vagabondage . . . means being one's self. Every true vagabond is himself."<sup>42</sup>

Stevenson, like many who celebrated the educative and restorative practice of walking during the nineteenth century, imagined its benefits in comparable physical, moral, and aesthetic terms, or what Anne Wallace has called a "deliberate making of self." In her theory of the literary "peripatetic"—derived from essays by Stevenson as well as by Vaughan Williams's relative Leslie Stephen—Wallace discerns an emphasis upon walking as a material process of cultivation and even of composition. Tracing an Anglo-American association of the wanderer-as-poet back to certain values and procedures inherent in early-nineteenth-century English travel poems, she demonstrates that "the natural, primitive quality of the physical act of walking" was proposed as a means of "reconnecting . . . with both the physical world and the moral order inherent in it," enabling "recollect[ion of] both our personal past and our national and/or racial past—that is, human life before mechanization." The physical act of walking thus provided access to a sense of "memorial continuity," becoming a "a cultivating labour capable of renovating both the individual and his society by recollecting and expressing past value."<sup>43</sup>

Whereas for Stevenson—as for Leslie Stephen—such benefits were necessarily achieved alone, earlier nineteenth-century travel texts emphasized a collective process wherein walking became a kind of pedagogy, an invitation to read the text. Wallace suggests, indeed, that some texts mimicked the experience of walking such that readers would feel they "could walk through" and "replicate the perspectives" of a poem. Vaughan Williams's

cycle functions comparably to call the listener to the space of an accessible text, whose making is highlighted by the guiding voice of the narrator. The sense of temporal and spatial displacement at the opening of "Youth and Love" perhaps follows Stevenson's suggested "dally" at "The Roadside Fire," affording a moment of contemplation upon the process of making undertaken thus far. It was in such moments, he declared in his essay "Walking Tours," that one could "throw [one's] clocks and watches over the housetop, and remember time and seasons no more."<sup>44</sup> With the collapse of the narrator's temporal and spatial distance at the climax of "Youth and Love," listeners are invited to become aware of their role in the music's making, retracing the steps undertaken in the earlier songs through their emphatic retrieval. Thus the music engages the listener in a restorative educational and creative practice through which historic values of musical collectivity and creativity are not simply achieved, but are didactically demonstrated.<sup>45</sup>

Essays on walking were anthologized during the early twentieth century "with a view to making travelers of society as a whole," as Roger Savage has pointed out.<sup>46</sup> Vocal pedagogues comparably sought to make travelers of singers and listeners. Such efforts formed part of a broader political, social, and cultural project to "return man to the land" amid rising anxiety over the future cohesiveness of the nation. It was through a complex relationship with such anxiety that the British musical revival flourished. Many of Vaughan Williams's *Travel* songs were taken as exemplars through which singers and listeners might undertake cultivating journeys toward the making or remaking of the musical self, fortifying the musical present and future by looking to the stabilizing collectivity of the past.

To hear the cycle in the temporal and spatial terms proposed contemporaneously is thus to recognize its shift away from the picturesque and toward a more embodied relation of sub-

<sup>42</sup>Cited in Marcus DeLoach, "Arthur Foxton Ferguson: A Vaughan Williams Singer and Collaborator," *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal* (February 2015): 9–12, here 9.

<sup>43</sup>Wallace, *Walking, Literature and English Culture*, 11–14. See also chap. 4, as well as chaps. 2 and 3. An abstract by Karen Leistra-Jones on *Songs of Travel* and the "peripatetic" is listed in the program of the 2016 North American British Music Studies Association conference.

<sup>44</sup>See Stevenson, "Walking Tours," 166–67.

<sup>45</sup>See my reading of "Silent Noon" from this perspective in "Making an English Voice."

<sup>46</sup>See Savage, "Books to Make a Traveller of Thee," esp. 12.

ject to landscape, a performance of man's return to the land. The realization of this embodiment is again afforded at the climax of "Youth and Love," for landscape in the *Travel* cycle inheres above all in traveling through the acoustic spaces opened in the songs. There are few signals or topics that function simply as landscape *representation*. The musical picturesque—predicated upon a fixed, visual perspective—is apparent only where the narrator appears to observe as though from a privileged, more static position at the opening of "Youth and Love." The climax functions precisely to collapse this vantage point, becoming a dynamic, phenomenological "zone of activity," as Daniel Grimley has put it, in which the "fundamentally performative" nature of music engages a sense of "being-in-place" and listening becomes a process of "flux" in which "any sense of permanence, of a stable subject-object distinction, is dissolved."<sup>47</sup> *Songs of Travel* enacts a comparable "placing" of the listener through its invitation to the singing and constitution of its landscape. In "Youth and Love," the achievement of the climax is both the memory and its realization, the past and its present performance.

If "Youth and Love" provides a means of re-establishing bonds with a personal and collective past, fortifying the self and community into the present and future, the following "In Dreams" and "The Infinite Shining Heavens" effect a pronounced shift toward isolation. Aside from the persistence of the piano's "walking" figures—suggestive of the journey's continuance—the only connection between the songs now is their emphasis upon the subject's autonomous individuality, a condition predicated upon the impossibility of collective memory. With "In Dreams" indeed the subject mourns with the passing of time a state of "unremembrance," its tragedy not simply the absence but the unresponsiveness of another (the beloved) who forgets him: "Perchance you wept awhile / And then forgot. / Ah me! but he that left you

with a smile / Forgets you not." In its excessive chromaticism the music retreats from the accessible balladic mode, adding a hint of melodrama in the sighing self-pity with which Vaughan Williams responds to Stevenson's exclamation.

"In Dreams" offers perhaps a parody of an alienated Lieder wanderer. Frequently heard as the weakest song of the cycle, it might rather be regarded as a deliberate critique of the act of writing achieved at the very end of "Youth and Love," when the singer, with the word "stave," arguably becomes a composer, aware of his status as the solitary "author" of the text. Just as Vaughan Williams insisted upon music's constitution less in its "letter" than in its orality/aurality, Stevenson launched a comparable critique of writing in his essay "A Chapter on Dreams" (1892), in which, as in such stories as "Thrawn Janet" (1881), he opposes orality to literacy, as does Vaughan Williams at the sonic and embodied climax of "Youth and Love."

The monologism of "In Dreams" is maintained in "The Infinite Shining Heavens," albeit held in tension now with a reconfigured collectivism. The piano's gentle strumming in spread chords conveys a minstrel-like wandering, complicating the self-conscious individuality simultaneously marked by a piquant, exploratory harmonic language and the final, telling line: "Till lo! I looked in the dusk / And a star had come down to me." Stars have been associated with creativity throughout the cycle's journey. In "Let Beauty Awake," the beloved who awakens to creative insight sees the stars "bright in the west"; in "Youth and Love," the enlightened climax is precipitated by the celestial nightfall.

As already noted, the turn after "Youth and Love" toward introverted individualism might well be heard as the consolidation of the artist's progressive maturation and autonomy. This reading accords not only with the stark shift toward conscious musical "artistry" but also with the sense of temporal advancement inherent in the nocturnal realm of these songs. Yet in mourning the absence of a creative other, the protagonist's own subjectivity is both exaggerated and stunted. The vagabond is afforded no further musical memories after "Youth and Love" (only in the withheld epilogue do these

<sup>47</sup>Daniel M. Grimley, "Music, Landscape, Attunement: Listening to Sibelius's *Tapiola*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/2 (2011): 394–98.

return). Thus denied access to his musical heritage, he becomes alienated from his enlightened self. The journey so far has traced the constitution of a specifically musical subject whose psychological depth is contingent upon his ability to reflect upon and draw nourishment from his performative musical past. That the "star" of creative inspiration returns after "The Infinite Shining Heavens" to the balladic mode of the opening is thus especially telling.

We know that Vaughan Williams took pains over the order of the cycle's final songs. The pre-existing "Whither Must I Wander?" offered a conclusion ultimately provided by "Bright Is the Ring of Words," as erased numbers on the manuscripts reveal. Had Vaughan Williams chosen the former he would have furnished the cycle with a solemn conclusion in which the subject continues to look mournfully into his personal past. In concluding as he eventually did, he validated poetry that looks neither back nor forward but exists in the eternal present tense, its anonymity enabling another collective statement inherent in the melody of "Bright Is the Ring of Words"—a melody soon after transformed by the composer into the hymn tune "Sine Nomine" and published under a pseudonym in *The English Hymnal* in 1906. Stevenson's poem reads as follows:

Bright is the ring of words  
When the right man rings them,  
Fair the fall of songs  
When the singer sings them.  
Still they are carolled and said—  
On wings they are carried—  
After the singer is dead  
And the maker is buried.

Low as the singer lies  
In the field of heather,  
Songs of his fashion bring  
The swains together.  
And when the west is red  
With the sunset embers,  
The lover lingers and sings  
And the maid remembers.

Vaughan Williams took up the editorship of the *Hymnal* in 1904. That "Bright Is the Ring of Words" can be heard in "Sine Nomine" might be regarded as marking a symbolic break out of the "artistic" mode of the cycle into the "real

life" realm of musical culture. The collective tone of this music issues an invitation to its own singing, much like those provided by Vaughan Williams's extensive and unprecedented directions for the performance of hymns in his preface to the *Hymnal*. Here he prescribed modes not simply of singing but of listening, insisting that "the people" take "an intelligent interest in the music they sing." Toward the end of his life he seized an opportunity to reiterate that the church provided a space where "artistic appreciation [becomes] a creative act" in which, even when silent, congregants should "go half way to meet the reader or singer to whom they are listening."<sup>48</sup>

Vaughan Williams's paternalistic tone signals something of a long-criticized authoritarianism.<sup>49</sup> As Anthony Sheppard points out in a discussion of Benjamin Britten's church parables, "Hymn-singing is one of the most coercive of musical genres, for it is virtually impossible not to respond to the call of the organ, to rise and at least hum the tune of the hymn: hymns are thus a potent unifying force."<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, Vaughan Williams's encouragement of "intelligent"—cerebral, individualistic—engagement with church music blurs the distinction between "hearing" and "listening" such that industry, and even a personal response, is invited from the listener. "Bright Is the Ring of Words" plays on precisely this tension between embodied, physiological hearing and a mode of listening that involves active engagement in intelligent selection. In the opening chord an organ-like command summons the intuitive, embodied engagement of one who must also recognize and react to the musical signal (see ex. 4).

The songs that follow "Youth and Love" might further be understood in the context of a shift in models of music appreciation in British musical culture after around 1880. The empha-

<sup>48</sup>"Preface to *The English Hymnal*" [1906], in *Vaughan Williams on Music*, 31–37, here 34. See also his later encouragement of music appreciation as practiced in church, in "Martin Shaw," 275–77.

<sup>49</sup>For a comprehensive outline and critique of such assessments, see Onderdonk, "The Composer and Society."

<sup>50</sup>W. Anthony Sheppard, *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Music Theatre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 121.

Moderato risoluto *f*

Bright is the ring of words When the right man rings them, Fair the

*risoluto*

fall of songs when the sing - er sings them.

Example 4, "Bright Is the Ring of Words," mm. 1–9.

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sis moved at this time from a unifying common response to a more mingled experience in which the perceptive listener was encouraged to fashion an individual musical engagement, or what Philip Ross Bullock has called "the audience's own subjective reading."<sup>51</sup> As Bullock underlines, it was in the highly subjective mode of late-nineteenth-century music—of the kind developed within "In Dreams"—that the development of the aesthetic self was most powerfully encouraged. The aimless wandering of the cycle's conclusion invites the listener to undertake an act of creation comparable to what Benedict Taylor, in his contribution to this issue, calls the "work" of subjectivity. The desolation of the subject's alienation from his musical self—a desolation of isolation—requires that the listener contribute an act of aesthetic creation in order to complete a sense of the

journey's narrative coherence. "Bright Is the Ring of Words" enacts the culmination of this process: the collective conclusion's achievement of a tradition in which another—the maid—remembers. Its particular triumph lies in the way in which the mode of "remembrance" rests not in the verbal symbol, not in Stevenson's text, but in the oral and aural achievement of a music whose musicocultural tradition was enacted with *The English Hymnal*.<sup>52</sup>

That *Songs of Travel* sustains a peculiar tension between the individualistic and the collective is perhaps unsurprising. Vaughan Williams was journeying toward the discovery of his creative self during a period described by Regenia Gagnier as one in which "the compatibility of individualism and socialism" flourished.<sup>53</sup> As British musical culture grappled for

<sup>51</sup>Philip Ross Bullock, "'Lessons in Sensibility:' Rosa Newmarch, Music Appreciation, and the Aesthetic Cultivation of the Self," *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 40/1–2 (2010): 295–318, referencing, in turn, Phyllis Weliver, *The Musical Crowd in English Fiction, 1840–1910: Class, Culture and Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>52</sup>As Vaughan Williams put it in the *Hymnal*'s preface, "Is it not worth while making a vigorous effort today for the sake of establishing a good tradition?" See *Vaughan Williams on Music*, 33.

<sup>53</sup>Gagnier, *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization*, 1.

an individual musical language that sustained the collective aspirations of a “national music,” the cycle’s narrative seems aptly to have foregrounded the achievement of creative individualism in the collective participation of a singing and listening community. In so doing it offers a comment of the kind articulated by Vaughan Williams in 1912, namely that “the composer must not shut himself away and think about art, he must live with his fellows and make his art an expression of the whole life of the community.”<sup>54</sup>

A parallel process is enacted within *The House of Life*, to which I briefly turn by way of conclusion. Though what follows can represent only a series of notes to further research, a comparison of the two cycles richly illuminates Vaughan Williams’s project for song at this time. Much as the Stevenson settings render love one with an artistic fate, the Rossetti cycle concludes with the transmutation of erotic union into a broader communitarian ideal.<sup>55</sup> Long understood to embody precisely the decadent individualism supposedly vitiated by *Songs of Travel*, the highly subjective musical language of *The House of Life* nonetheless nourishes a narrative conclusion in which the “Sine Nomine” motif again issues an invitation to the constitution of a collective musical self. It is here, once more, that the music’s subjectivity is realized in the singing and listening of another, and it is here, perhaps, that we find an explanation for Vaughan Williams’s withholding of the epilogue to *Songs of Travel* (the premiere of the two works in the same recital must surely have highlighted their corresponding conclusions). Thus the cycles become a self-conscious celebration of precisely the condition toward which both Stevenson and

Rossetti aspired in their poems: the condition of music.<sup>56</sup>

If *Songs of Travel* makes an ambivalent claim to the projection of a consistent creative persona, *The House of Life* is resonant with a plethora of lyric and narrative voices, exquisitely profiled in music that moves from the almost painful, Schumannesque intimacy of “Love-Sight” to the public, orchestral Wagnerisms of the penultimate “Death in Love.” Yet an invitation to configure some kind of coherence is issued through the recurrence of motivic material throughout, most obviously when the cycle’s opening is recalled at the end of “Love’s Last Gift,” the last of six sonnets chosen from 101 published in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s eponymous sequence.<sup>57</sup>

Rossetti’s “Love’s Last Gift” is concerned self-consciously with what it calls “song” as figured in acts of singing and listening.<sup>58</sup> The term probably refers primarily to poetry, but in Vaughan Williams’s setting the familiar metaphor seems to go further. The literary references depend on, and so highlight, music’s prior, superior capacity to enact Rossetti’s characteristic theme, namely the “blurring of the boundaries between self and other.”<sup>59</sup> Suzanne Waldman has traced a move across the sequence from love in its “narcissistic imaginary aspects to the symbolic enjoyments that promise greater scope for genuine intersubjectivity.”<sup>60</sup> Vaughan Williams provides a musical corollary, beginning with “Love-Sight” and ending with “Love’s

<sup>54</sup>Vaughan Williams, “Who Wants the English Composer?” [1912], in *Vaughan Williams on Music*, 39–42, here 42.

<sup>55</sup>This proposition would fit squarely with notions of love probably encountered by Vaughan Williams through his association from the 1890s onward with members of the so-called “Cambridge Apostles,” who debated such propositions as that “love and friendship graduated into one another” with “copulation of secondary importance.” See Paul Levy, *Moore: G. E. Moore and the Cambridge Apostles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 142.

<sup>56</sup>Roger Lewis likens Stevenson to the decadent and aesthetic poets on this basis: see *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 14–15.

<sup>57</sup>For a detailed discussion, see Allan W. Atlas, “Ralph Vaughan Williams’s *The House of Life*: Four Levels of Cyclic Coherence,” *Acta Musicologica* 85/2 (2013): 199–225, and by the same author, “Vaughan Williams and the Sonnet,” *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal* (February 2016): 17–24.

<sup>58</sup>On this trope in Rossetti’s work, see, for example, Elizabeth Helsinger, “Listening: Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Persistence of Song,” *Victorian Studies* 51/3 (2009): 409–21.

<sup>59</sup>David G. Riede, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti Revisited* (New York; Oxford: Twayne; Maxwell Macmillan, 1992), 122.

<sup>60</sup>Suzanne M. Waldman, *The Demon & the Damsel: Dynamics of Desire in the Works of Christina Rossetti and Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 96.

Last Gift." Accordingly, the cycle opens with the poetic subject's searching for the self in the reflection provided by another:

When do I see thee most, beloved one?  
 When in the light the spirits of mine eyes  
 Before thy face, their altar, solemnize  
 The worship of that Love through thee made  
 known?  
 Or when, in the dusk hours, (we two alone)  
 Close kissed and eloquent of still replies  
 Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,  
 And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

The piano's prelude articulates a suitably ambivalent presentation of a divided self or of a lover and beloved. A searching, tentative ascending figure is followed by the consoling release of a descending answer (see ex. 5, mm. 1–11). The potential capacity for union and completion, in spite of difference, is already inherent in the descending figure's delivery of the C-major harmony, which the ascending figure has been seeking. Rossetti's solipsism seems thus confirmed, and the stage set for a musical journey toward a synthesis of the divided musical self.

Yet this self faces a struggle that reaches beyond internal unification, as the prelude's curiously disjointed relation to the opening of "Love-Sight" proper may be heard to suggest. The two motives create a peculiar frame for the cycle, negating and moving away from the A major promised by the key signature in order subsequently to re-take it (from m. 12 onward). This retrospectively imparts a disjointed perspective upon the opening ideas, a sense that they mark a boundary and were appended later. Indeed, the song seems to begin in earnest only with a textural shift at m. 12, followed by the establishment of the home key and the entry of the voice (which takes up the first of the motives) at m. 16. Crucially, this sense of disjunction is recalled in "Love's Last Gift," in which, finally, it is rhetorically resolved.

The sonnet selected by Vaughan Williams for his final song reads as follows:

Love to his singer held a glistening leaf,  
 And said: "The rose-tree and the apple-tree  
 Have fruits to vaunt or flowers to lure the bee;  
 And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf  
 Of the great harvest marshal, the year's chief

Victorious summer; aye, and 'neath warm sea  
 Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably  
 Between the filtering channels of sunk reef.

All are my blooms; and all sweet blooms of love  
 To thee I gave while spring and summer sang;  
 But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang  
 From those worse things the wind is moaning of.  
 Only this laurel dreads no winter days:  
 Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my praise."

In culminating with this poem, the cycle extracts from Rossetti's almost willfully unintelligible narration the understanding that Love's ultimate gift is the gift of song.<sup>61</sup> "Love's Last Gift" begins with the "Sine Nomine" tune—a "crystallized" form of the opening motifs, as Stephen Banfield puts it, constituting a new theme of "attained spirituality."<sup>62</sup> The divided subjectivity thus finds apparent union at the opening of the song.

Yet the cycle's own opening returns for the setting of the sonnet's closing couplet, and its return marks the music's demand for a greater communion, one that reaches outside itself. As the onset of Autumn brings with it a final threat in the premonition of death, the laurel that "dreads no winter days" promises hope. By long-established convention, the laurel stands here for poetry; Vaughan Williams's setting transfers the association to that other age-old metaphor for poetry, song, making literal the poem's final statement, "thy heart hath sung my praise." The motif with which the prelude begins is recalled now in its original form for the first time since the cycle's first measure. This time, however, the crucial words are sung by the voice: "Only this laurel dreads no winter days." Thereafter, a return to the moment of disjunction with which "Love-Sight" began is resolved through a further utterance of the hymn motif (see ex. 6).

The heart of this resolution is the reclamation by the voice of the opening instrumental gesture, a gesture of incompleteness. The threat is assuaged by this voicing, which issues a

CERI  
 OWEN  
 Vaughan  
 Williams's  
 Early Songs

<sup>61</sup>Paull Baum provides an invaluable series of paraphrases in *The House of Life: A Sonnet Sequence by Dante Gabriel Rossetti; with an Introduction and Notes by Paull Franklin Baum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), here 153–54.

<sup>62</sup>Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 82.

Andante con moto ma non troppo

*pp* teneramente  
è molto sostenuto

*p dolce*

tranquillamente ma con profonda

*p*

When

*pp molto legato*

*espressione*

do I see thee most, be loved one?

Example 5: "Love Sight," mm. 1–20.

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"songful" invitation to its own singing, a demand to be sung that is met by the further and final collective utterance of the hymn.<sup>63</sup> The enactment of the "last gift" of communal song is underlined by the past tense of the final utterance, as the singing of the music we have been listening to is exposed in its performativity, its prior musical working shown to have preceded the textual confirmation.

The quality of collectivity and the invitation to its own singing are already inherent in the lyrical melody of "Love's Last Gift," which is rich in a regular tunefulness not readily found

elsewhere in the cycle. Yet its songful invitation also resides in the song's self-conscious awareness of having voiced the contribution of a silent singer-listener whose presence lurks throughout the poem. After all, a narrating voice has informed us at the opening of "Love's Last Gift" that "Love to his singer" speaks; the sonnet thereafter is a quotation, the act of Love's speech marked out as such. But the "singer" to whom Love speaks is also, presumably, a listener. Vaughan Williams's music mobilizes the otherwise silenced voice of such a listener, refusing Rossetti's introverted solipsism in favor of intersubjective communion with another.

The triumph of music in the form of song thus becomes the culmination of a journey marked by the "tread" motif heard in the cycle's

<sup>63</sup>On the communicative "songfulness" activated when the instrumental is vocalized in this way, see Kramer, "Beyond Words and Music," 54.



71 *Lento* *quasi Recit.*

*p*

On - ly this lau - rel dreads\_\_ no win - ter days:\_\_\_\_\_

*pp*

79 *Tempo I*

*p* *mf*

Take\_\_\_\_\_ my last gift, Take\_\_\_\_\_ my last gift,

*p* *mf*

87 *ff* *freely*

thy heart hath sung my praise,\_\_\_\_\_ thy heart hath sung\_\_\_\_\_ my

*ff* *p colla voce*

95 *p*

praise.

*p* *pp smorzando*

Example 6: "Love's Last Gift," mm. 71-102.  
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final three measures, a curious gesture of a kind more obviously suitable to *Songs of Travel*. Yet *The House of Life* represents a comparable journey in which music's procession toward intersubjectivity with a listener becomes its very content—the cycle, as so often in Vaughan Williams's output, is about the making and hearing of music itself. Both cycles become realizations of what Vaughan Williams was later to idealize in the following statement: fostering a tension between individualism and collectivism, aestheticism and populism, communitarianism and authoritarianism—a music through which listeners' subjectivities dawned in an awareness that "the composer is their own voice speaking through his art."<sup>64</sup>



<sup>64</sup>Vaughan Williams, "Who Wants the English Composer?" [1912], in *Vaughan Williams on Music*, 40.

### **Abstract.**

Vaughan Williams's celebrated set of Robert Louis Stevenson settings, *Songs of Travel*, has lately garnered liberal scholarly attention, not least on account of the vicissitudes of its publication history. Following the cycle's premiere in 1904 it was issued in two separate books, each gathering stylistically different songs. Though a credible case for narrative coherence has been advanced in numerous accounts, the cycle's peculiar amalgamation of materials might

rather be read as a signal to its projection of multiple voices, which unsettle the longstanding critical tendency to map a single protagonist through its progress. The division marked by the cycle's publication history may productively be understood to reflect a tension inherent in its aesthetic propositions, one constitutive of much of Vaughan Williams's work, which frequently mediates between the individualistic and the collective, the "artistic" and the "accessible," and, as I suggest, the subjective voice of the individual artist in its invitation to the participation of a singing and listening community.

I propose that Vaughan Williams's early songs frequently frame the idea or demand the engagement of a listener's contribution, as particular modes of singing and listening—and singing-as-listening—are figured and invited within the music's constitution. Composed as he was searching for an individual creative voice that simultaneously sustained a nascent commitment to the social utility and intelligibility of national art music, these songs explore the possibility of achieving a self-consciously collective authorial subjectivity, often reaching toward a musical intersubjectivity wherein boundaries between self and other—and between composer, performer, and listener—are collapsed. In the recognition of such processes lies a means of examining the tendency of Vaughan Williams's work toward projecting a powerfully subjective voice that simultaneously claims identification with no single agency. Keywords: Ralph Vaughan Williams, subjectivity, national identity, *Songs of Travel*, *The House of Life*